

Transactive Writing: Across the Grades and Content Areas

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Education



Facilitators: Depeka Croft,
Dena Cole, Lee Ann Hager

Materials for this session

<http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/Instructional+Resources/High+School/English+Language+Arts/Writing/Writing++Cluster+Leader+Training+Materials.htm>

Guiding Questions

- ☐ What is transactive writing?
- ☐ Why is transactive writing so important, and what makes transactive writing “authentic”?
- ☐ How can teachers better integrate transactive writing into classroom instruction?
- ☐ What specific transactive writing concerns need particular attention?

Guiding Question

What is transactive writing?

Transactive writing is

writing that is intended to get things done.

writing that informs a less informed audience about a subject or a topic that the audience needs or wants to know about.

Transactive writing is

based on fact (non-fiction) and **should not be contrived** if students are to reach the "authentic" purpose called for on the *Kentucky Writing Scoring Rubric*.

Some features of transactive writing

Transactive writing should

have a focused purpose—an authentic reason for being written beyond simply completing an assignment.

Transactive writing should

take the form of writing seen in the world beyond the classroom. Common transactive forms are speeches, letters, articles, editorials, proposals, etc.

Transactive writing should

address a targeted audience besides the teacher (in writing for publication).

Transactive writing should

Engage the reader with an interesting beginning, one that gives some context or reason for the information which follows.

Transactive writing should

demonstrate depth of idea development with specific, relevant details and move the reader through the piece with logical organizational strategies.

Most of all, when writing for publication, transactive writing should

be based on **student choice and ownership**. Students should have a choice in defining their topics and base the writing and the focus of the writing on their own inquiry questions.

Helpful Hints

If you are asking students to write transactively to assess their understanding of content knowledge, **you may be limiting what the student can do for a piece written for publication** (this does not mean a piece intended for publication doesn't demonstrate content knowledge, however).

Writing to assess content understanding **is a perfectly legitimate kind of writing.** However, this type of writing is called writing to demonstrate learning and is **not** the kind of writing that is expected in the portfolio.

Writing that is intended for publication has an expectation of an "authentic focused purpose," and teachers may help students create authentic pieces for publication if they allow as much student choice and ownership as possible.

Guiding Question

Why is transactive writing so important, and what makes transactive writing "authentic"?

Why is transactive writing important?

Transactive writing is

- ☐ practical and promotes writing skill development.
- ☐ appropriate for content area classes.
- ☐ applicable in the workplace and in life beyond school.
- ☐ included in portfolio assessment.
- ☐ assessed in on-demand writing assessment.

Why is authenticity in transactive writing so important?

Let's take a broader look:

From a recent report from the Alliance for Excellence in Education,
"[Schools should] make efforts to motivate those students (many of whom have been demoralized by years of academic failure) and engage them in reading and writing assignments that tap into their individual interests" (2007).

So what does that mean?

Instruction in transactive writing is one area that can help students make the large gains toward developing literacy and communication skills, preparing for life beyond school, and improving assessment scores.

How can teachers help students improve authenticity in transactive writing?

Let's review. . .

To understand our conversation about "authenticity" in transactive writing, it's important to understand the three types of writing that should be integrated across the content areas and grade levels.

Three types of writing called for in the *Kentucky Program of Studies* (across grades and content areas)

- ☐ Writing to Learn
- ☐ Writing to Demonstrate Learning
- ☐ Writing for Publication

Let's start with considering the idea of authenticity. . .

"Authenticity" suggests that the student has made many of the decisions regarding the development of the writing—that the writing is "authentic," real, or genuine to the individual student.

In other words, the student has had opportunities to choose the purpose or purposes for which he/she needs or wants to write.

To help students improve authenticity in their writing

Give the student the opportunity to determine his/her audience and focus based on the purpose he/she wants to achieve.

Help students maintain ownership in the writing.

To help students improve authenticity in their writing

Help the student explore—through writing—an area of inquiry that matters to him or her.

Do not automatically assume that writing to demonstrate learning can automatically be "turned into" a sample for publication.

Improving Authenticity

In short, to improve the authenticity of a piece of transactive writing, the student must make many of the decisions and take ownership of his/her writing. The writing should **matter** to the student.

Improving Authenticity

Certainly, in writing for publication, students can and should demonstrate their learning to a high degree. It's simply that the teacher should not control the writing so much that the ownership is removed from the writing opportunity.

A final thought on authenticity

- The word "authentic" suggests far more than a real-world form. Though "real-world" forms certainly contribute to authentic transactive writing, there is much more to the definition of authenticity as it applies to writing.
- It's worth noting that **not all real-world forms** allow students to demonstrate the criteria on the *Kentucky Writing Scoring Rubric*.

Guiding Question

How can teachers better integrate transactive writing into classroom instruction?

As yourself this question. . .

What units and lessons that you already teach in your grade level and content area lend themselves to transactive writing?

Transactive writing should be integrated into instruction through

- ☐ Writing-to-Learn activities
- ☐ Writing-to-Demonstrate Learning activities
- ☐ Writing-for-Publication opportunities
- ☐ Mini-lessons
- ☐ Content area writing
- ☐ On-demand practice

Guiding Question

What specific transactive writing concerns need particular attention?

Areas of concern across the state related to transactive writing include

- ☐ Writing feature articles
- ☐ Writing speeches
- ☐ Integrating analysis into transactive writing

Feature Article Writing-
Answering the "Burning"
Question



Guiding Questions

- What is the feature article?
- What are the types of feature articles?
- What are the characteristics of feature articles?
- How can I improve my instruction of the feature article?

A Feature Article is ...

- A human interest story that answers a higher-level question (how? or why?)
- Attempts to involve the reader emotionally
- One that deals with real events and issues
- A whole piece of writing meant to be read from beginning to end.

Types of Feature Articles

- Human Interest--most common, describes an aspect that makes him, her, or it interesting
- Personality--focuses on the personality of person writing about
- How-To--process of "doing" something
- Past Events--focuses on historical events
- News--focuses on human-interest of some late breaking news

Characteristics of Feature Articles

- Answers a **how** or **why** question(s)
- Evokes an **emotional** reaction: joy, sympathy, anger, frustration, contentment, or some other emotion
- Gives **depth** and **meaning** to some complicated issue or item
- Is **nonfiction** and **factual**, research-based

Characteristics of Feature Articles

- Focuses on subject of interest to **targeted** audience
- **May** contain some short story elements
- Uses a **lead** that attracts readers
- Uses **catchy** titles, headings, subheadings
- Uses voice or tone **appropriate** to its subject
- Ends with a closing that **connects back** to the beginning
- Leaves the reader with **something to think about**

WOW! WHAT A DIFFERENCE?

Feature Articles

- Offers fresh, focused insights
- Awareness of audience throughout
- Appeals to the audience's interests
- Leaves the audience with new insight or knowledge
- Almost persuasive, always reaching out to connect with readers and maintain interest

Reports

- Presents information in order to inform rather than to interest audience
- Aimed at everyone
- Leaves the audience with the question of what to do with the information
- Robotic, dry

Improving Instruction-- Model, Model, Model

- ☐ Provide feature articles
- ☐ Identify the author's focused purpose (how or why question)
- ☐ Identify how the answer was developed
- ☐ Identify how the writer tied back to the beginning and left the reader with something to think about

Feature Article 4th Grade Example

BOO!
Stay Safe On Halloween

GETTING STARTED

- ☐ Focusing-generating a list of interesting topics
- ☐ Prewriting-determining the most interesting topic
- ☐ Prewriting-researching the topic
- ☐ Prewriting-determining the type of feature article
- ☐ Choosing the single focused purpose
- ☐ Determining the organization
- ☐ Drafting the lead
- ☐ Drafting the body
- ☐ Drafting the conclusion
- ☐ Revising and editing
- ☐ Publishing

RESOURCES

- *Kentucky Writing Handbook*, KDE, Fall 2006
- *Kentucky Marker Papers*
- *Building the Foundation the WRITE WAY* by Donna Vincent and Susan A. Miller
- *Webster's New World Student Writing Handbook*, Fourth Edition by Sharon Sorenson
- "Feature Article Writing in the Elementary School" by Ruby K. Clayton
- Dr. Charles Whitaker, materials, ECU.

Speeches

What writing skills should be taught to write a effective speech?

- Clear occasion or context
- Presentation versus the document
- *Kentucky Marker Papers Skills List*

Speech Skills List

Purpose

- ☐ Focuses on the purpose (e.g., to entertain, to persuade, to inform, to demonstrate)
- ☐ Uses appropriate tone for the event, audience and purpose

Speech Skills List

Addressing the Audience's Needs

- ☐ Shows an understanding of the audience's perspective
- ☐ Writes from the perspective of an informed speaker to a less-informed listener
- ☐ Anticipates audience's reactions, questions, lack of understanding
- ☐ Makes it clear what the audience member should know, do, and/or believe as a result

Speech Skills List

Idea Development/support

- ☐ Develops ideas which are connected to the core content
- ☐ Uses appropriate strategies to develop ideas
- ☐ Uses information from a variety of sources
- ☐ Clarifies and interprets ideas
- ☐ Uses persuasive techniques
- ☐ Provides support which is accurate and thorough enough to achieve the purpose of the speech.

Speech Skills List

Organization

☐ Writes an engaging lead to get the audience's attention

☐ Introduces the points of the speech in the introduction

☐ Places ideas in a meaningful order

☐ Uses transitions between ideas

☐ Maintains coherence and unity

☐ Reviews the points of the speech in the conclusion

☐ May use visual aids

What is the best format to use for a speech?

☐ The Introduction

☐ The Body

☐ The Closing

Speech Example

Support Stem Cell Research

Where can I find examples of speeches?

- On-demand Writing Released Items Packet (Spring 2007)
- *Kentucky Marker Papers* (Revised version coming soon)
- Online resources
- Professional literature
- KDE Summer WebEx training: Transactive Writing

Integrating Analysis into Transactive Writing Instruction

Analysis. . .

- Is a means of idea development. By definition, analysis means the student is "breaking down" the problem, issue, or topic to examine that problem, issue, or topic to draw new conclusions about it.
- Strong analysis should be done in the service of a real purpose (not simply to produce an analytical piece for the portfolio).

Authentic Analysis

- Let's look at the introduction from two different analytical transactive samples. While analysis should be happening at all grade levels, these samples were written by twelfth grade students.

Greek Idealism vs. Roman Realism

You may ask what is idealism? What is realism and how do they differ from one another? In this paper, I am going to explain these words in contrast with their definitions. . . I will also be using examples of art to demonstrate how Greek Idealism differs from Roman Realism.

Idealism is the theory in art which the artist paints or sculpts. It is his idea of what the picture or sculpture should resemble and not how the artist truly sees the person or object that is being painted or sculpted. Idealism is also the conformity to or the belief in ones ideas. These art works do not show reality in any way.

One example of art work that shows Greek Idealism is the Greek statue of kore. A kore is a clothed maiden.

Keeping America's Food Supply Safe

Imagine a time thousands of years ago before recorded history, when the first farmer scratched in the dirt and planted the first seeds. Ever since that momentous day, agriculture has been in a constant state of evolution. Change is a concept that we rarely like to embrace [sic] however, change is inevitable. We might feel better about our changing world if we call it growth, revolution, or transformation. No matter what we want to call it, we live in a constantly changing society. The American agriculturalist is no stranger to change. In order to be successful in today's rapidly changing advancing world, he must be adaptable. He must arm himself with the knowledge of his shifting surroundings in order to climb above the rest. . . .

"Keeping. . ." continued

Good morning. My name is _____ and I'm representing the _____ County FFA Chapter.

During my generation's lifetime, we have never witnessed America make so many changes and adjustments as it has in the past year and a half. The events of September 11th touched our hearts but left us with a new sense of national insecurity. Our nation is now on guard against madmen who threaten our existence. Not all of us can serve in the military or law enforcement but we must all recognize our responsibilities here at home. The American agriculturalist has the all-important task of keeping the food supply safe from terrorists who endanger the well being of the world's population. . .

How do we integrate analysis into instruction?

- ☐ Have students ask their own analytical questions about areas of interest.
- ☐ Work with students on critical thinking skills to promote analytical thinking skills.

Work with students in all grade levels and content areas about analytical thinking and writing.

- ☐ Ask students to answer how? Why? or to what degree? questions in their writing.

Final thoughts

- ☐ Transactive writing is an important category of writing that should be integrated into instruction across the grade levels and content areas.

- Transactive writing is practical in that it is one of the categories of writing that will help students in life beyond school—in the college, in the workplace, in their lives as citizens.

[illegible]

- Transactive writing that is meant for publication should allow room for student choice and ownership, so that students may achieve the “authentic focused purpose” indicated on the scoring rubric.

[illegible]

A Recap

- After studying portfolio analysis results and talking with educators, three particular concerns need attention:
- Feature articles
- Speeches
- Integrating analysis into transactive writing

Transactive writing is important for students to practice in all grade levels and content areas.

Contact Information

Kentucky Department of Education
(502) 564-2106

Depeka Croft
Depeka.Croft@education.ky.gov

Dena Cole
Dena.Cole@education.ky.gov

Lee Ann Hager
LeeAnn.Hager@education.ky.gov
